C/2025/5522

16.10.2025

ESACTA LITERAL DE LOS DEBATES DE 29 DE ENERO DE 2025

(C/2025/5522)

PARLAMENTO EUROPEO

PERÍODO DE SESIONES 2024-2025

Sesión de 29 de enero de 2025

BRUSELAS

Sumario

Página

1. Reanudación del período de sesiones . . . 2
2. Apertura de la sesión . . . 2
3. Orden de los trabajos : véase el Acta . . . 2
4. Sesión solemne – Día Internacional de Conmemoración en Memoria de las Víctimas del Holocausto . . . 2
5. Aprobación del Acta de la presente sesión : véase el Acta . . . 7
6. Calendario de las próximas sesiones : véase el Acta . . . 7
7. Cierre de la sesión . . . 7
8. Interrupción del período de sesiones . . . 7

ESACTA LITERAL DE LOS DEBATES DE 29 DE ENERO DE 2025

IN THE CHAIR: ROBERTA METSOLA

President

1. Reanudación del período de sesiones

President. – I declare resumed the session of the European Parliament adjourned on 23 January 2025.

2. Apertura de la sesión

(The sitting opened at 12:05)

3. Orden de los trabajos : véase el Acta

4. Sesión solemne – Día Internacional de Conmemoración en Memoria de las Víctimas del Holocausto

President. – Dear Members, distinguished guests, we gather here today to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust in this week that carries profound significance, as we mark both the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust – the millions of Jewish people murdered simply for being Jewish – and the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp.

Today we honour the memory of the millions who perished at the hands of Nazi Germany and its regime of evil by remembering not just how they died, but how they lived – through the stories that they left behind.

We begin with the story of composer Pál Hermann, who was murdered by the Nazis in 1944. His story is carried by this beautiful cello – once lost, later found and now brought to life. So I invite you first to turn to the screens to watch a short film about this very moving story.

(A video for the commemoration of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day was played in the Chamber)

(Applause)

Ladies and gentlemen, today we remember the 6 million Jewish men, women and children who were murdered by Nazi Germany; 6 million lives extinguished in a deliberate, organised and State-sponsored genocide of the Jews of Europe. They were gassed, shot, starved, murdered in ghettos, herded into cattle cars, buried in mass graves, killed in labour camps and in death camps designed solely to annihilate. Entire communities wiped out; entire families slaughtered; entire generations stolen. But even that horror did not wipe out the hope of the Jewish people.

We remember, too, all those Roma and Sinti communities and countless others slaughtered because of their faith, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability or political opinions.

On Monday, I represented this House at Auschwitz, joining Holocaust survivors and world leaders to mark the anniversary of the liberation of the largest and deadliest of the Nazi extermination camps. Today, Auschwitz stands as a lesson for all of humanity. In the words of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, the question is not 'Where was God?', but 'Where was man? Where was humanity?'.

The Holocaust did not happen overnight. The dehumanisation of the Jews of Europe began long before Auschwitz. It began with words, with propaganda that vilified Jews as 'dangerous' and 'alien'. It began with exclusion, humiliation and the systematic stripping away of dignity. By the time the Final Solution was set in motion, the path had already been paved by indifference and hate.

That is why we can never forget and why we must act. Ours is the last generation to have the privilege of knowing Holocaust survivors and hearing their stories first hand. Their voices, their courage, their memories are a bridge to a past that must never be forgotten. Because even after the horrors of the Holocaust, antisemitism did not disappear. It persisted.

And today, antisemitism is on the rise again – in Europe, across the world and online. Myths, lies and conspiracy theories – centuries-old stereotypes dressed in new rhetoric – are spreading like wildfire on social media, in our schools and workplaces, in politics and in the media. The consequences are terrifyingly real: anti-Jewish hate crimes in Europe have surged by 400 %. Many are forced to hide their religion in public.

Elie Wiesel once warned us: 'If we forget, we are guilty. If we forget them, they will be killed a second time. And this time, it will be our responsibility'. Memory is a duty; a responsibility that 'never again' is not an empty promise. On Monday, Auschwitz survivor Tova Friedman reminded us that 'today we all have an obligation not only to remember, but also to warn and to teach that hatred only begets more hatred, killing more killing'.

This European Parliament will always remember, and we will always speak up, just as our first woman President, Simone Veil – herself a survivor – taught us to do. Her legacy reminds us that neutrality helps only the oppressor, never the victim. And this Parliament will always stand for dignity, for hope, for humanity.

In a moment, we will hear the 'Duo for violin and cello – Andante' by Pál Hermann, played on Pál's original cello by the extraordinary Sam Lucas, with Sadie Fields on violin. And we will hear the story of Pál Hermann's daughter, Corrie Hermann, who carries her father's memory forward. May their music and their stories inspire us to do the same: to carry forward their memories, to speak out against hate and to ensure that the words 'never again' are not just spoken, but lived.

(Sam Lucas, cello, and Sadie Fields, violin, performed 'Duo for violin and cello – II. Andante' by Pál Hermann)

(Applause)

That was very moving. Thank you.

It is now my great honour to give the floor to the daughter of composer Pál Hermann, Corrie Hermann.

Corrie Hermann. – Dear President of the European Parliament, dear Roberta Metsola, dear Presidents, dear Members, Commissioners, excellencies, distinguished guests, this story about one Holocaust victim is dedicated to every one of the 6 million victims whom we deplore today.

My father, Hermann Pál, was born on 27 March 1902 in Budapest, in a well-to-do family. At the time, Budapest was still the second capital of the Habsburg Empire – the era which Stefan Zweig depicts in *Die Welt von Gestern*. The Jewish citizenry had become gradually an integral part of the community, and joined intensively in the professional, cultural and financial life.

Hermann Pál was intelligent and musical, and was admitted, at the age of 15, as a cello student at the famous Franz Liszt Academy, established in 1875 – the cradle of many generations of top musicians from Hungary. His best friend became the violinist Székely Zoltán, who would become a worldwide-known soloist and the first violinist of the New Hungarian String Quartet. Pál developed not only as a cellist but also as a composer. His teachers were Kodály and Bartók.

Even before the formal completion of his training, he reaped his first success in a private concert at the house of Arnold Schönberg with the 'Sonata for Cello Solo', which Kodály had composed a few years earlier. A performance of this sonata at a concert in Switzerland, which was organised by the International Society of Contemporary Music, was the first step in his international career.

But in the meantime, the First World War had raged in Europe. The Habsburg Empire was no more. Hungary's wings had been clipped by the Trianon Treaty, and the new leader, Admiral Horthy, was the first one to introduce antisemitic laws. The young cellist went to Berlin and changed his name from the Hungarian Hermann Pál to Paul Hermann.

In Berlin, musical life was blooming. Paul took lessons at the Staatliche Academische Hochschule für Musik. To earn a living, he became a teacher at the progressive Volksmusikschule Berlin-Neukölln and he played in all kinds of ensembles: Baroque music, the great classics – Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven – and contemporary compositions by Hindemith, Ernst Toch and, of course, Kodály and Bartók.

The tie with Zoltán Székely was to endure all his life. Zoltán had settled in the Netherlands. Together they gave concerts which were favourably reviewed in the Netherlands, Germany and England. In London they stayed often at the house of a Dutch couple, Jacob de Graaff and Louise Bachiene. De Graaff was a wealthy businessman. He and his wife were lovers of art and music, and liked to entertain young artists. They admired the two musicians so much that in 1927 they bought a Stradivarius violin for Zoltán and, in 1928, a Gagliano cello for Paul. That cello has a leading part in this story.

Louise de Graaff corresponded frequently with relations in the Netherlands, and when Paul Hermann was scheduled to play in Amsterdam, she urged her young niece, Ada Weevers, to go to the concert and meet the artist. This meeting was such a success that they became engaged and married in 1931. They settled in an apartment in a new Berlin quarter, Charlottenburg. I was born in 1932 and there are pictures of my father holding me on the balcony.

But in 1933 came bad luck. On 30 January, Hitler became *Reichskanzler* in Germany and a threatening atmosphere for Jewish people becomes immediately acute. Jews are fired from public functions. Paul Hermann loses his job. The little family seeks refuge with Ada's parents in the Netherlands. In the summer holiday, they stay near the seaside and, when swimming, Ada gets caught in a vortex in the waves and nearly drowns. She inhales water, it leads to pneumonia and she dies a few months later.

Paul Hermann joins Hungarian colleagues in Brussels. Together they perform as the Gertler Quartet. They tour Belgium, France, Switzerland, Italy, Hungary. He has left me with my maternal grandparents; a younger sister of my mother takes loving care of me. Every time my father visits is delightful. The whole family adores him.

After a few years in Brussels, Paul Hermann moves to Paris and continues his international career. On 4 August 1939, I turned seven. I remember him coming, always with his cello. Only recently, I found a letter my father wrote to a friend telling me about all the difficulties he had to get permission from the French authorities to cross the border to Holland. Foreign Jews are already under suspicion.

But I only know it's my birthday, a party. As a present, my father gives me the new French book, '*Histoire de Babar, le petit éléphant*', and he teaches me my first French words: '*Babar entre dans l'ascenseur, il monte dix fois en haut et descend dix fois en bas mais le garçon lui dit 'ce n'est pas un joujou, monsieur l'éléphant"*.

But again, the atmosphere is threatening. War breaks out at the end of August. Borders are closing. All foreign visitors return hastily. That winter, Western Europe is mobilised, but the fighting is in the east. We can still correspond. But in the spring, Hitler looks toward France. The French army is preparing the defence. Paul Hermann joins a *régiment de marche de volontaires étrangers* to assist the French army. In June, the Germans are in Paris. Northern France, Belgium and the Netherlands are occupied and under German rule. As a schoolchild, I remember the little boards everywhere: '-*Verboden voor Joden*'.

In France, the southern region is at first not occupied. People feel relatively safe there. Hermann and his cello stay first with the de Graaff couple, who have moved from London to the region south of Bordeaux, but then he moves to a room in Toulouse. He has some pupils and can give a few recitals. Censorship makes corresponding very difficult. We get only very few letters.

Sometimes he can visit Ada's brother, Jan Weevers, who has an agricultural business in a village about 150 km from Toulouse. This brother-in-law supports him as much as he can. But in 1942, all France is occupied. The terror of the Gestapo reigns also in Toulouse. In Budapest, Berlin, Paris, Paul Hermann has been able to flee from antisemitism. Now this is not possible anymore. He takes false papers, names himself de Cotigny and hopes for the best.

But on 21 April 1944, he is arrested in a street raid, taken to the Toulouse prison and transported to Drancy, the assembling camp near Paris, from where the transports for the concentration camps departed.

In May 1944, he is put in a wagon with 60 other men as a part of transport number 73 from Drancy. While the train is waiting at the station, he manages to write a note to his brother-in-law and throws it out of the train. A kind passenger, who probably realises this could be a last message, posts it. Miraculously, it reaches Jan Weevers. It reads:

'On nous a dit que nous allions travailler à l'Organisation Todt. Nous sommes pleins d'espoir malgré tout. Quant à mes instruments, je te prie de sauver ce que tu peux.'

There is hardly any transportation, but Jan Weevers manages to go to Toulouse, where Paul's rooms have been sealed by the Gestapo. Spoils of war. He forces a window and exchanges the precious Gagliano cello for a cheap student's instrument. He takes it home. Paul's cello is saved.

Transport 73 is not put to work for the organisation Todt. It is sent all through Europe to Kaunas in Lithuania. We don't know what happened, but only a handful of the 900 prisoners who arrived in Kaunas will return after the war.

In the Netherlands, 1944-1945 is the hardest year of the war. There is no food, no heating. The infrastructure is heavily destructed. In May 1945, the Canadians entered the city where we lived. The Nazi regime capitulates, and it is immense joy.

Only weeks later, we hear what has happened in France. Investigations by Jan Weevers have been in vain. Will Paul Hermann return? In Tony Judt's standard book *Postwar*, we read about the chaos in Middle Europe: many millions of displaced persons roam in deplorable conditions through what is left of Germany. Some returned home after months or years. Many don't. Gradually we realise Paul will never come back.

Surrounded by a beloved extended family, I grow up, go to the university to study medicine, marry, have a family. As a doctor, I work mainly in public health. And at the end of my career, I am elected in the Netherlands Parliament for the Green Party. After retirement, I am reminded of a pile of handwritten music scores which have been laying around for more than 60 years. They are old compositions of my father. He played music with his colleagues in all kinds of combinations.

The Dutch foundation Forbidden Music Regained, which focuses on the work of composers who were persecuted by the Nazis, is interested. They are greatly impressed by the quality of the music, and organise concerts and recordings. My son Paul, named after his grandfather, develops into the coordinator of this legacy and makes it accessible to musicians all over the world.

When he's visiting cousins in Los Angeles, they introduce him to the Recovered Voices project of the Los Angeles Colburn School of Music, which is also aimed at persecuted composers. Top cellist Clive Greensmith is enthusiastic about Hermann's music, especially about a draft for a piece for cello and orchestra. Paul has a friend, an Italian composer, Fabio Conti, who makes the draft into a complete piece for cello and orchestra using themes from other Hermann compositions. Greensmith plays the premiere in 2018, in Lviv, Ukraine.

But another staff member in Los Angeles, Carla Shapreau, says: 'Yes, this is the music. But where is that Gagliano cello?' In 1953, Jan Weevers took the cello to the Netherlands. It has been sold to finance my studies, but we don't know who bought it.

Carla enlists the help of Oxford-based biography writer Kate Kennedy, who is working on a book about the duality of cellists and their cellos. Kate also gets under the spell of the Hermann story, and she looks for the cello literally all over the world – asking cellists, luthiers, instrument dealers, music schools, browsing through auction catalogues. Who knows the whereabouts of a Gagliano cello made in 1730 with the text *'Ego sum anima musicae'* – I am the soul of music – on the side? But Kate does not find it. The publication date of her book nears; she feels defeated.

The book *Cello* is published. Cellists everywhere read it. And then Kate gets a mail from a Chinese cello professor, Jian Wang, acting as jury member for the *Concours Reine Elisabeth* here in Brussels in 2022. He has noticed a cello. It is in the possession of the Robert Schumann Musik Hochschule in Düsseldorf, and only their best students are permitted to play it. At a presentation of Kate's book *Cello* in the Wigmore Hall in London, where my father performed 100 years ago, Australian Sam Lucas plays, on Paul Hermann's cello, one of his compositions.

Between 1920 and 1940, Paul Hermann played the same cello in all Western and Central Europe. Searching for this icon of European culture has connected people from all over the world: from Europe to Los Angeles to China to Australia. And its amazing story has captured interest everywhere.

For me, this is a reunion in spirit with the father whom I have missed for 85 years.

Hitler has burned books, destroyed paintings and buildings, murdered millions of people. But music is invincible.

Ego sum anima musicae. Freude, schöner Götterfunken. Alle Menschen werden Brüder.

President. – *(Interruptions off mic by Mr Braun)*

Thank you, Ms Hermann, for that moving speech. I must also inform you, Ms Hermann, the father of Simone Veil was on the same train as your father, so the connection with this Parliament is very deep.

Please, dear colleagues, can I ask you now to join me in observing one minute of silence in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

Can I please ask for silence from the gallery? We will now stand for a minute's silence in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

(The House observed a minute's silence)

(Interruptions off mic by Mr Braun)

Thank you. As the last part of this ceremony, I now invite Sam Lucas and Sadie Fields to play 'Kaddish' by Maurice Ravel, which is based on a Jewish prayer of the same name.

(Interruption off mic by Mr Braun)

Mr Braun, you leave the Chamber now!

I ask that the Member is escorted out of the Chamber now! Please!

I think an apology is due to Ms Hermann, and to Mr Lucas and Ms Fields. Please go ahead.

(Sam Lucas, cello, and Sadie Fields, violin, performed 'Kaddish' by Maurice Ravel)

(Sustained applause)

Thank you very much. As this solemn ceremony draws to a close, may we each carry forward the torch of memory, so that hatred has no sanctuary and humanity prevails. Europe remembers! Never again!

5. Aprobación del Acta de la presente sesión : véase el Acta

6. Calendario de las próximas sesiones : véase el Acta

7. Cierre de la sesión

(The sitting closed at 12:57)

8. Interrupción del período de sesiones

President. – The session of the European Parliament is adjourned.

Explicación de los signos utilizados

*	Procedimiento de consulta
***	Procedimiento de aprobación
***I	Procedimiento legislativo ordinario (primera lectura)
***II	Procedimiento legislativo ordinario (segunda lectura)
***III	Procedimiento legislativo ordinario (tercera lectura)

(El procedimiento indicado se basa en el fundamento jurídico propuesto en el proyecto de acto.)

Abreviaturas utilizadas para las comisiones parlamentarias

AFET	Comisión de Asuntos Exteriores
SEDE	Comisión de Seguridad y Defensa
DEVE	Comisión de Desarrollo
INTA	Comisión de Comercio Internacional
BUDG	Comisión de Presupuestos
CONT	Comisión de Control Presupuestario
ECON	Comisión de Asuntos Económicos y Monetarios
EMPL	Comisión de Empleo y Asuntos Sociales
ENVI	Comisión de Medio Ambiente, Salud Pública y Seguridad Alimentaria
SANT	Comisión de Salud Pública
ITRE	Comisión de Industria, Investigación y Energía
IMCO	Comisión de Mercado Interior y Protección del Consumidor
TRAN	Comisión de Transportes y Turismo
REGI	Comisión de Desarrollo Regional
AGRI	Comisión de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural
PECH	Comisión de Pesca
CULT	Comisión de Cultura y Educación
JURI	Comisión de Asuntos Jurídicos
LIBE	Comisión de Libertades Civiles, Justicia y Asuntos de Interior
AFCO	Comisión de Asuntos Constitucionales
FEMM	Comisión de Derechos de la Mujer e Igualdad de Género
PETI	Comisión de Peticiones
DROI	Subcomisión de Derechos Humanos
FISC	Subcomisión de Asuntos Fiscales

Abreviaturas utilizadas para los grupos políticos

PPE	Grupo del Partido Popular Europeo (Demócrata-Cristianos)
S&D	Grupo de la Alianza Progresista de Socialistas y Demócratas en el Parlamento Europeo
PfE	Grupo Patriotas por Europa
ECR	Grupo de los Conservadores y Reformistas Europeos
Renew	Grupo Renew Europe
Verts/ALE	Grupo de los Verdes/Alianza Libre Europea
The Left	Grupo de la Izquierda en el Parlamento Europeo - GUE/NGL
ESN	Grupo Europa de las Naciones Soberanas (ENS)
NI	No inscritos